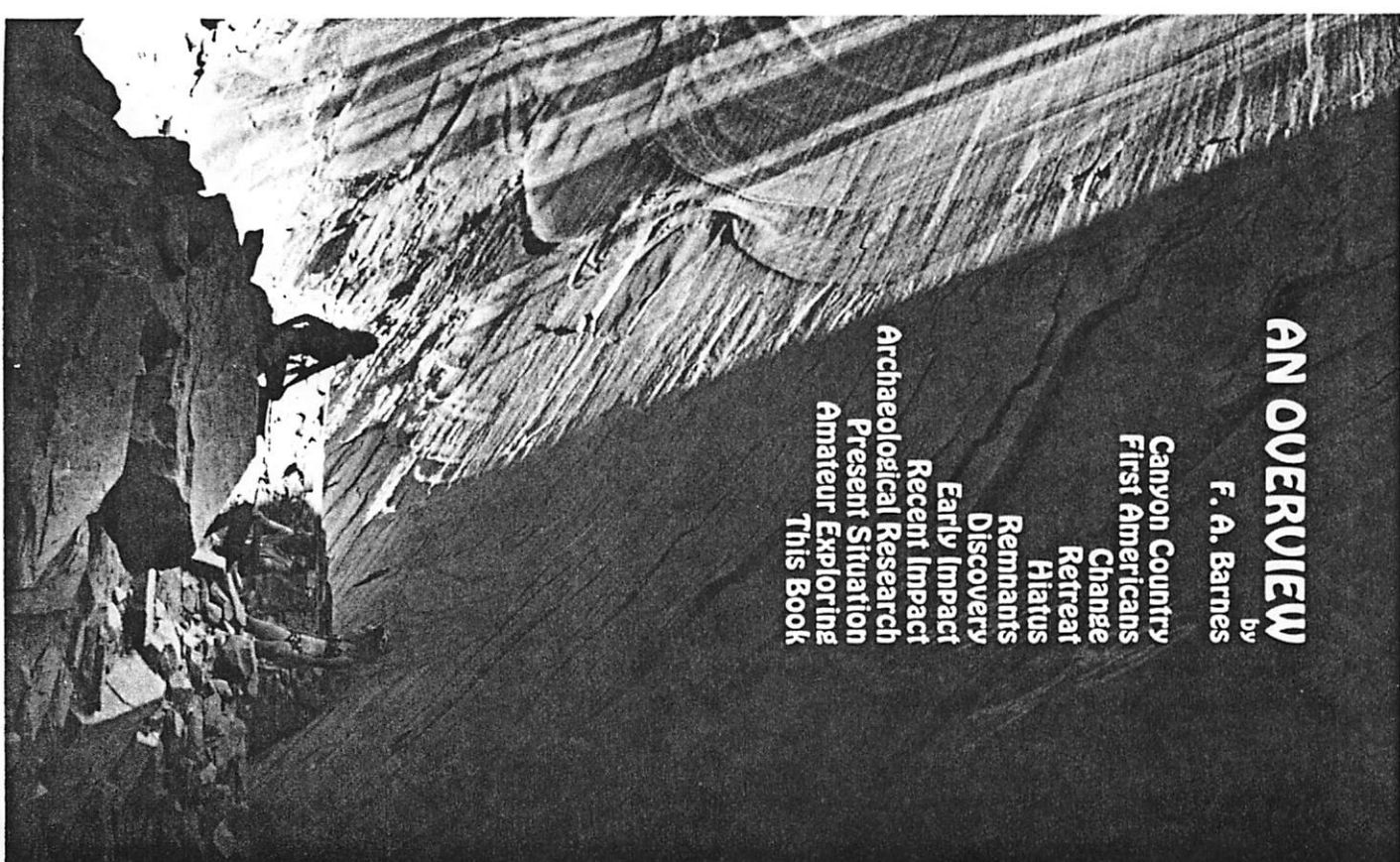


## AN OVERVIEW

by  
F. A. Barnes

Canyon Country  
First Americans  
Change  
Retreat  
Hiatus  
Remnants  
Discovery  
Early Impact  
Recent Impact  
Present Situation  
Amateur Exploring  
This Book



Cave-wall pictographs above Defiance House ruins, Forgotten Canyon, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

# CANYON COUNTRY PREHISTORIC INDIANS

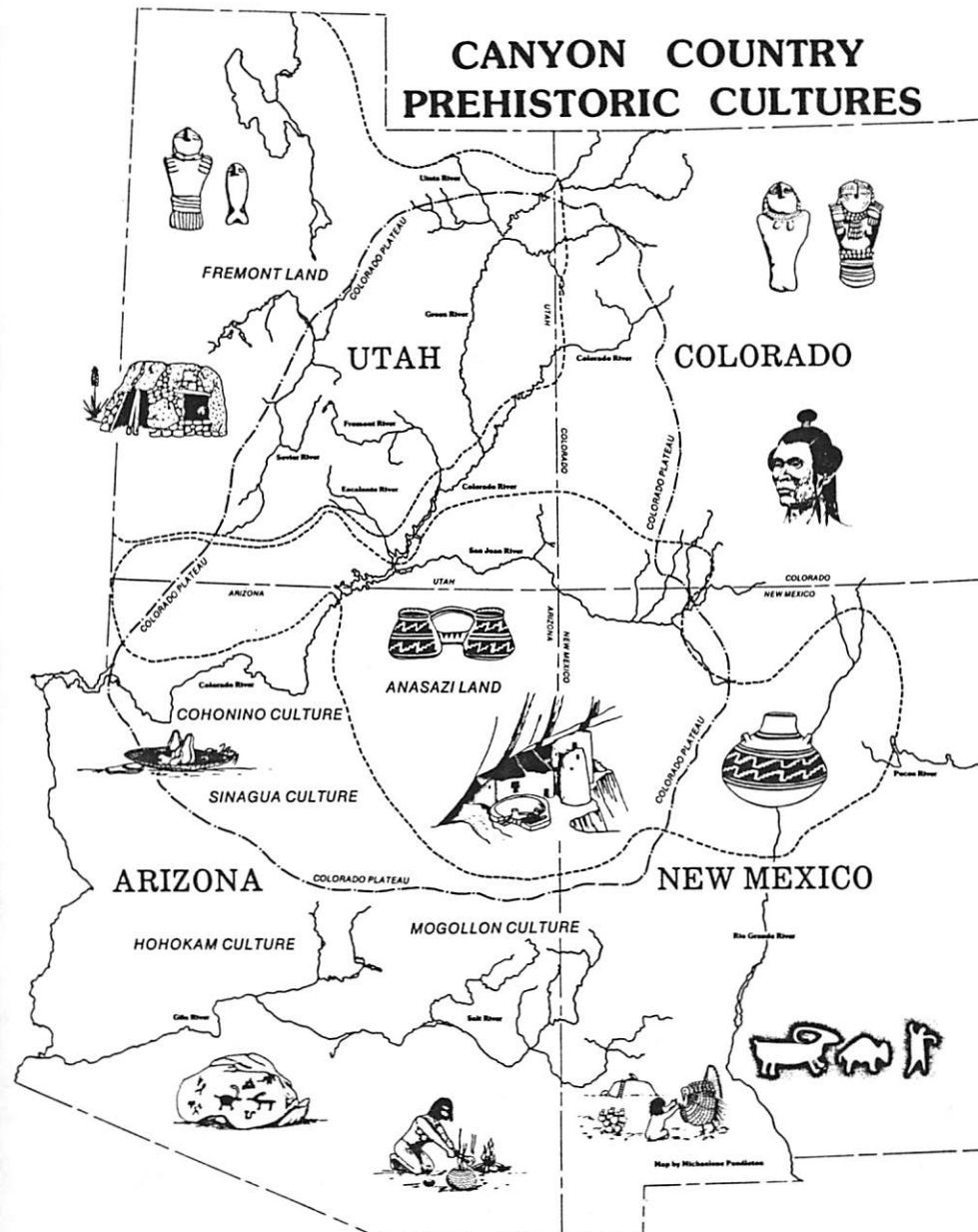
THEIR CULTURES, RUINS,  
ARTIFACTS AND ROCK ART

by  
**F.A. Barnes  
and  
Michaelene Pendleton**

An illustrated guide to understanding  
the prehistoric Indian cultures  
of the general Four Corners region,  
with sections listing sites  
where the remnants of these cultures  
can be viewed.



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## FIRST AMERICANS

Anthropologists are widely agreed that the human race originated in the eastern hemisphere, in Africa and Asia, but they do not agree on when and how humanity came to occupy the two major continents of the western hemisphere, North and South America, and their connecting link, Central America.

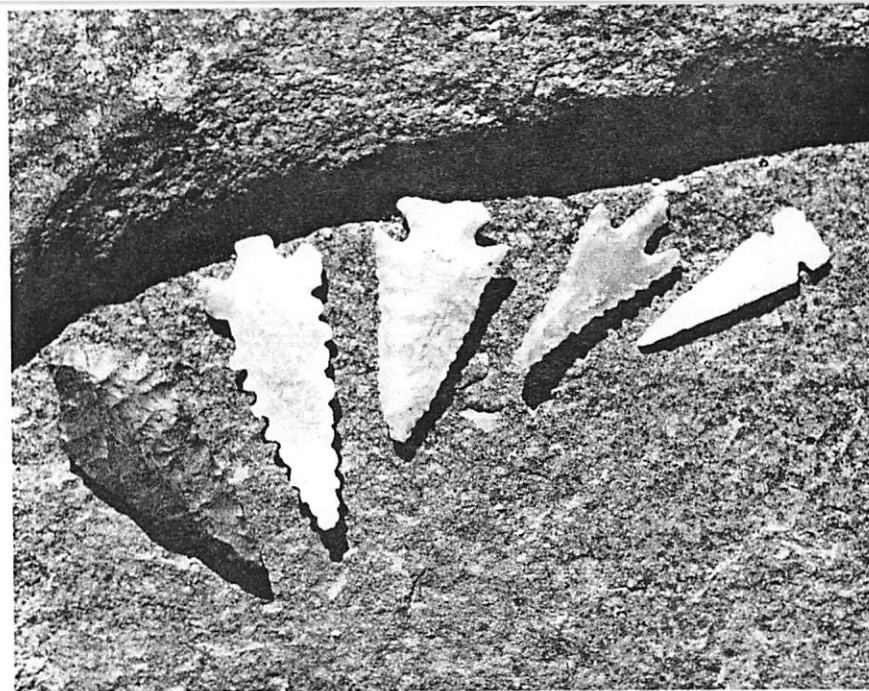
Archaeologists, those anthropologists who specialize in humanity's long and mysterious pre-history, have found plentiful evidence that the first humans reached the western continents by way of a broad land bridge between Alaska and Siberia that has intermittently linked Asia and North America during the last several million years as the world's sea level has fluctuated.

Indisputable evidence gathered to date indicates that the first major human migration into the Americas took place sometime between 12,000 and 15,000 years ago, although there are some indications of very limited migrations as early as 25,000 to 35,000 years ago.

The migration of some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago is well established, and there is incontestable evidence that beginning about then, humanity spread steadily across most of North and South America. Some scientists point out that this flow of humanity onto two continents previously empty of its species was coincidental with the retreat of a glacial age. This retreat first opened a feasible land route for the migration of certain larger land animals, and for the human hunters who followed these animals. The retreating, melting glaciers then closed the land route by simply raising the world's sea level.

It is well established that the early humans who entered the western hemisphere about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago were subsequently isolated for thousands of years from any contact with humanity in the eastern hemisphere. This isolation imposed genetic limitations upon western hemisphere humanity, but also allowed environmental influences to mold these early Asiatic migrants into the distinct ethnic group known today as American Indians, or "Amerinds," as distinct from the East Indians who occupy the Indian subcontinent of Asia.

Physical anthropologists have found that all Amerinds share certain body characteristics, such as sharply limited blood types, unique skin pigmentation, stocky build, dark eyes, coarse and straight head hair, sparse body hair, rare baldness and graying, and certain anomalies in their fingerprints and teeth. These shared characteristics, and others less obvious, appear to indicate that relatively few people crossed that land bridge some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, and that these predecessors of the American Indian were isolated for millennia from the main gene pool of humanity in the eastern hemisphere.



*Small arrowheads, Canyonlands National Park collection.*

There is some evidence that developing Amerind humanity received a minor infusion of Asian traits about 5000 or 6000 years ago, probably via a briefly reopened Siberian-Alaskan land route. There is also some evidence that a primitive seagoing Asiatic culture may have made contact with early Amerinds along the west coast of South America some 2000 or 3000 years ago, but to date this evidence is not conclusive.

Regardless of all the incomplete aspects of humanity's story in the western hemisphere, it is well established that the Asiatic migrants who reached America about 12,000 to 15,000 years ago spread fairly rapidly, although sparsely, across most of North, Central and South America. There, these primitive, Stone Age humans set about adapting to whatever lands they chose to occupy.

The lifestyle these earliest Americans used was the only one they knew, that of hunting and gathering, moving constantly with the wild game and as the seasons affected the plant products they ate. While such a hunting-gathering culture is primitive, hazardous, difficult and virtually unchanging, it has one enormous advantage in a natural environment. No matter how rugged that environment may be, hunting-gathering is a flexible, high survival style of living. It does not encourage the development of "higher" cultural traits or an explosive growth of population, but it does permit survival of the



species over a long period of time and through all kinds of natural adversity and change.

The first Americans arrived from Asia as very primitive Stone Age, or "Lithic," savages. As they spread south and east across North America from what is now Alaska, they slowly adapted to the rich, new lands they were occupying, gradually phasing into what archaeologists call the "Archaic" stage of cultural development. The transformation from Lithic to Archaic cultural stage was essentially one of changing from a relatively narrow, limited subsistence base to one that utilized more of the available natural resources.

During the earliest or Lithic stage, these first Americans had few and very primitive tools, and they concentrated more on the larger game animals, possibly because this was the tradition they brought with them from Asia. As they adapted to the new land, however, with its different and perhaps more diverse resources, these early Amerinds developed a much broader subsistence base, using smaller game as well as larger animals, learning to use America's many edible fruits, seeds and other plant products, and developing more complex tools to aid in this diversification.

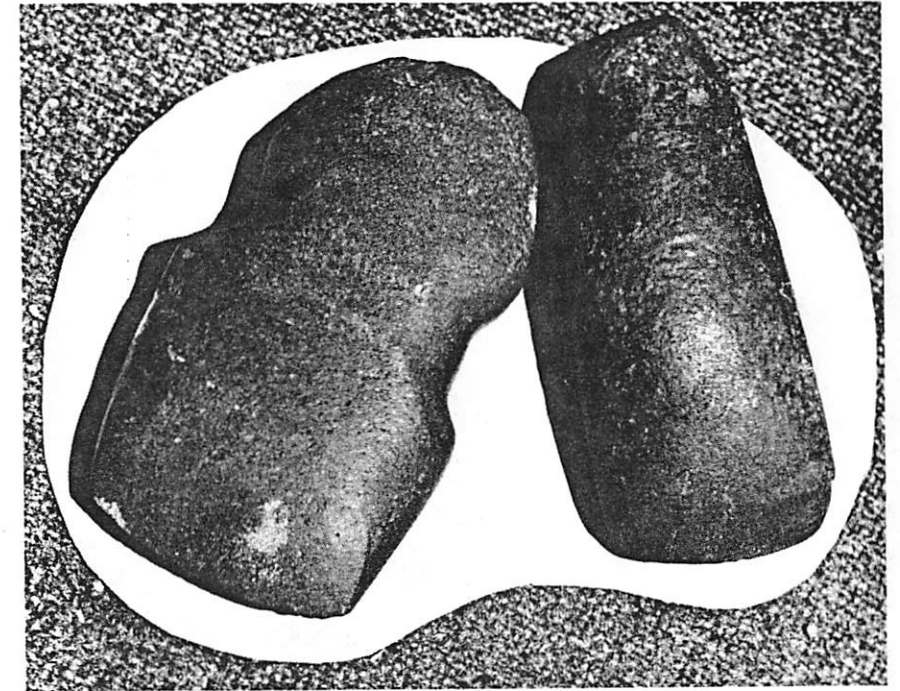
The first or Lithic stage lasted until about 9000 years ago, although this varied in different parts of the North American continent. Those who occupied the more rugged western region of the continent adapted to the Archaic level first, followed by those in the eastern forestlands. The last to adapt were the occupants of the central plains, perhaps because the big game animals so vital to Lithic tradition were the most abundant there.

## CHANGE

The Archaic cultural stage persisted virtually unchanged for thousands of years over the entire North American continent, then something triggered a major cultural phase change in the region that is now Central America, transforming the Amerinds who occupied this tropical region from peripatetic hunter-gatherers into relatively stationary agriculturists. Archaeologists call this next cultural phase the "Formative."

As noted earlier, there is some evidence that the Amerinds in Central America may have been jolted out of their static Archaic stage by infusions of more advanced cultures from across the Pacific Ocean, brought to the western hemisphere by hardy Asiatic seafarers thousands of years before Europeans began sailing westward across the Atlantic Ocean.

Whatever the cause, be it cultural transfusion or spontaneous development, beginning several thousand years ago, the Amerinds of Central America and vicinity moved rapidly from the primitive Archaic culture into the far more sophisticated Formative stage.



*Stone ax heads, Moab Museum collection.*

Agriculture, basic to the Formative stage, encouraged innovation in other cultural aspects, including weaponry, clothing, ceramics, religion, handicrafts, architecture and social structure.

Slowly but inevitably, these major new cultural attributes moved northward and eastward from their base in Central America and Mexico, spreading among the sparse inhabitants of North America like slow motion ripples from a stone dropped into water.

Strangely, these slow motion cultural ripples completely bypassed the Archaic stage Indians who occupied what are now northern Mexico, most of Nevada and the Pacific coast states. The Amerinds in this vast far-west region were still in the Archaic stage of development when historic European and Asian explorers first contacted them.

The Formative cultural innovations from Mexico did, however, affect the Archaic stage inhabitants in the general region of the present Four Corners states. There, the introduction of agriculture marked the transition of these ancestors of the "Anasazi" Indians from the nomadic Basketmaker I or "Desert Archaic," cultural level, into the semi-agrarian Basketmaker II phase at about A.D. 1, give or take a century. These and other cultural classifications are discussed in further detail in the last section of the chapter on PREHISTORIC CULTURES, and are illustrated graphically on the inside back cover.



The Archaic predecessors of the Anasazis were a hardy and rugged people, well adapted to survival in a vast region that had been slowly but steadily becoming warmer and more arid over the ten millennia since the last continental glaciers had retreated from what is now the United States. As they accepted the cultural innovations from the south, such as agriculture, ceramics and, later, stonemasonry, textiles and social systems, they adapted these new things to their own local conditions, retaining such regional traditions and traits as food preparation techniques, unique adaptations to the local environment, a classless society and a non-aggressive nature.

Beginning with the Basketmaker II phase, the distinctive Anasazi culture developed steadily for about 1200 years, reaching during its peak at about 1200 A.D. the highest level of cultural attainment that the American Indian was to reach before the native Amerind culture was shattered forever by the influx of European cultures beginning in the 16th century. In contrast to the relatively sophisticated cultural achievements of the Anasazis, the Indian tribes in the eastern and southeastern regions of North America were fairly primitive. The slow-motion cultural ripples from Mexico had not reached them as soon, and environmental pressures for innovation had not been so severe.

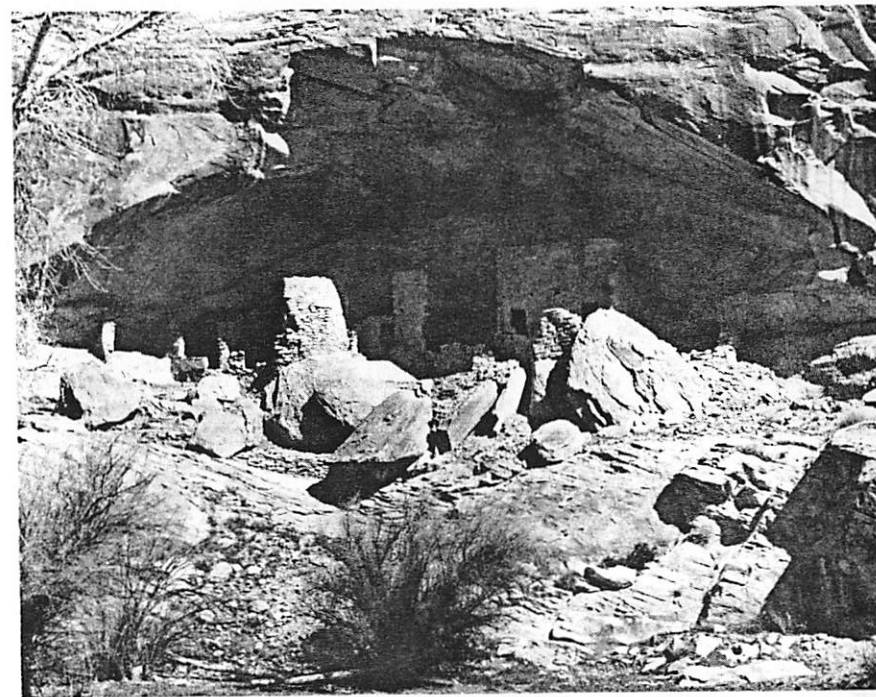
Modern Americans, who live at a time when the flow of technical and cultural innovation seems to be southward, from America into Mexico, may find it difficult to believe that not too long ago the flow of innovation was northward, from Mexico to the rest of North America.

And while the great Amerind cultures of South and Central America and Mexico were the highest attained within the western hemisphere, the highest level ever reached by native North Americans was the Anasazi culture of canyon country.

## RETREAT

The burgeoning Anasazi culture was not to continue its growth, however. Beginning some time around 1200 A.D., something, or several things, happened that drastically affected the Anasazis and other neighboring cultures in the Four Corners states. At its peak, the Anasazi culture loosely occupied an immense area in the general Four Corners region. To the north of Anasazi territory, the Fremont culture occupied almost all of the rest of what is now Utah, plus a small segment of northwestern Colorado. South of the Anasazis, the Mogollon, Hohokam and other cultures sprawled across most of what are now the states of Arizona and New Mexico. See the regional map on the inside front cover.

By 1250 A.D., these tribal territories had begun to shrink, with the Fremonts and Anasazis losing ground the most rapidly. By 1300 A.D., the Fremonts were essentially gone as a distinctive Formative-



*Anasazi cliff-dwelling, San Juan River gorge, Utah.*

stage culture, and the Anasazis had completely withdrawn from all their previously thriving settlements and larger communities in Utah and Colorado. They continued to occupy only greatly shrunken regions in northeastern Arizona and central New Mexico.

This massive cultural retreat continued, with significant developmental progress at a virtual standstill, until Spanish explorers first entered the region in 1540 A.D. Although the forceful impact of the Spanish culture on the region's Amerind cultures somewhat muddled the anthropological waters, archaeologists are pretty well agreed that two of the modern Pueblo tribes, the Hopis and Taos, are the direct descendants of the Anasazis, while the neighboring Mogollons and Hohokams became the modern Zuni and Pima-Papago, respectively.

The full story of what happened to the thriving Anasazi, Fremont and adjacent cultures may never be known. There is at present no consensus among archaeologists, although several have suggested possible causes based upon their field research findings.

One archaeologist, who has spent years excavating Anasazi sites in southeastern Utah, proposes that some of the larger Anasazi communities may have committed "ecological suicide," with a little help from changing or varying climate and other factors. By this concept, as the larger, more sophisticated pueblos grew, they used



more and more trees for structural purposes, fuel and other uses, slowly denuding nearby forests and thus destroying them as watersheds and sources of game and forage foods. This in turn placed more of a burden on agriculture, which itself suffered from failed springs and streams, plus flash flooding from the destroyed watershed. There is considerable evidence to show that this complex ecological disaster actually happened at some of the larger Anasazi communities.

An anthropologist who is quite familiar with the prehistoric and historic Amerind cultures of the Four Corners region, has proposed that communicable diseases played an important, if not vital, part in the region's drastic cultural retreat during the latter part of the 1200s A.D. He theorizes that once the pueblo culture reached a certain critical stage of development, with the attendant large centers of occupation and fairly regular travel between them, a virulent disease, perhaps inadvertently "imported" from the tropical cultures in southern Mexico, could spread rapidly and disastrously. Certainly, modern medical research has shown that such a cause-and-effect relationship can exist between population density and the rapid spread of contagious diseases.

Other archaeologists have other ideas. One is that prolonged drought over the entire region caused widespread starvation and withdrawal to a few areas that had reliable water sources. Another is that the peaceful, agrarian pueblo tribes were beset by nomadic, warlike raiders from neighboring regions, perhaps as a secondary effect of the drought that is known to have occurred. Or perhaps the pressures from the nomadic tribes, which are known to have invaded from farther west about this time, were in the form of the persistent theft of crops and stored food. Either type of cultural pressure, if prolonged, would have been devastating to the indigenous canyon country cultures.

There is also evidence that in some areas of the region, there was an apparent change from the normal winter rains to destructive summer flash flooding. There is geologic evidence to indicate that there was, indeed, a short range climatic change about that time, with attendant glaciation at elevations above 10,000 feet.

No one of these hypotheses, however, seems to be sufficient explanation for the drastic cultural retreat forced onto the Anasazis, the Fremonts and other nearby Formative-stage cultures. It would be difficult to stretch the ecological suicide concept to fit the hundreds of very small Anasazi settlements, or the less advanced Fremont villages, even though this process probably did affect some of the larger Anasazi communities.

The communicable disease proposal does not explain why the Anasazis abandoned some large pueblos, but not others, nor why the Fremonts seemed to backslide almost completely into the Archaic stage. Tree ring studies have shown that the big drought that did occur in the mid-1200s A.D. was not that much worse than others had been, casting doubt upon the drought hypothesis, at least as the sole

cause. And while a climatic shift that brought a change in rainfall pattern would doubtless have caused trouble for a farming culture, generally such climatic shifts occur slowly, over centuries, and farmers over the ages simply grin-and-bear-it with short-range weather vagaries.

The idea of severe pressures of one sort or another from more primitive tribes from farther west has considerable merit, since it has been well demonstrated throughout all of human history that mankind is usually its own worst enemy. Even so, there is little evidence to support the idea of numerous armed attacks and mass slaughter. Many Anasazi settlements were simply abandoned, without any signs of violence. Nor does the concept of food and crop raids seem to be enough to explain the complete destruction of the Fremont culture, and the enormous loss of population and mass exodus to a few small areas that mark the Anasazi territorial retreat.

Time and further research may reveal a clear-cut cause for this strange cultural phenomenon, but in all probability this cause will prove to be multi-faceted, a complex, interrelated blend of several different effects, some now known, others yet to be discovered.



*Hungo Pavi ruins, Chaco Canyon National Monument, New Mexico.*



## HIATUS

Following the abrupt withdrawal of the Anasazi culture in the southern part of canyon country, and the dissolution of the less advanced Fremont culture in the northern part of the region, there was a cultural hiatus of several hundred years in most of canyon country. The remnants of the Anasazis occupied the Rio Grande Valley in north-central New Mexico and three smaller areas farther west, while the surviving Fremonts integrated into other surrounding Archaic-stage cultures.

This exodus left most of the extensive Anasazi-Fremont region empty of permanent inhabitants. Bordering tribes entered the region solely for hunting and foraging. In the northern part of the region, in most of what is now Utah and southwestern Colorado, this cultural hiatus persisted into the late 1800s A.D., when white explorers and settlers first entered the area.

In the southern part of canyon country, however, the vast expanses of land the Anasazis had abandoned soon attracted another more primitive people, the predecessors of the Navajo and Apache tribes. Anthropologists who specialize in languages believe that these southward-drifting nomads were of Athabascan stock, from northwestern Canada and the Alaska interior. The route these invaders of canyon country took has not been fully determined, but some archaeologists believe they traveled southward through the game-rich Rocky Mountain range, to disperse into the Four Corners region and on south.

This new cultural wave entering the southern part of canyon country was still essentially in the Archaic, or non-agricultural, phase. Even so, the tough tribesmen who moved into the territory vacated by the Anasazis were better armed than the peaceful, agrarian Anasazis. Further, the invaders were quite aggressive and warlike, with a curious cultural propensity for "borrowing" from other tribes. Their borrowing included food, women and any cultural traits that seemed useful.

This, in turn, put further pressures upon the remaining Anasazi enclaves. As a result, Anasazi territory shrank still more. By 1700 A.D., despite still further pressures from Spanish explorers and colonists, the descendants of the Anasazis still occupied their Rio Grande Valley pueblos and several other areas to the west, while the Navajo Indians, as the cultural invaders who remained in canyon country came to be called, claimed most of the rest of the region. Despite a series of treaties imposed upon these two disparate cultures by white men, the territorial dispute between them continues even today, a dispute that is rooted in more than 500 years of cultural antipathy.

## REMNANTS

The retreat of the Anasazi culture from the immense region occupied during its heyday, and the dispersal of the Fremonts from their almost equally large territory, left behind a whole spectrum of cultural remnants, from great cliff dwellings to remote, seasonal hunting camps; from heaps of broken pottery to thousands of panels of rock art; from graves filled with human bones and artifacts to isolated sites where religious ceremonies took place.

As time passed, these cultural remnants slowly yielded to the elements, although the semi-arid climate that dominates the general Four Corners region is far less destructive to archaeological sites than the wetter climate in other parts of the country. On the whole, the region's drier, desert climate, together with the resulting sparse vegetation, rugged terrain and late development by our current culture, tended to preserve the Anasazi and Fremont remnants quite well. The remains of early Amerind cultures in the richer, more quickly developed parts of America have not fared very well at all.

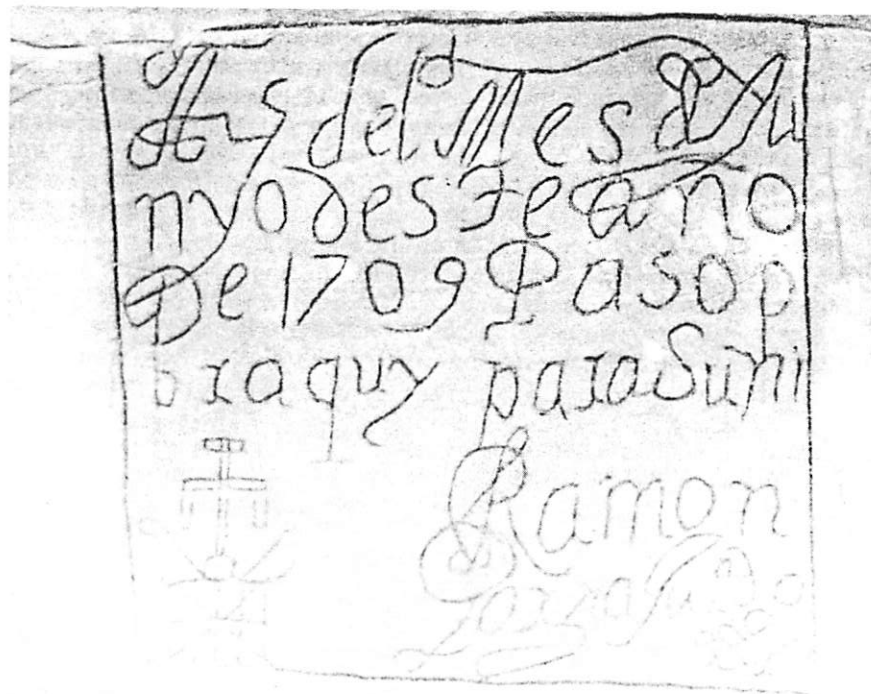
Strangely, the Archaic culture that invaded the land deserted by the Anasazis did little or nothing to destroy the Anasazi remnants left behind. The ancestral Navajos used the land as hunters, foragers and herdsmen. They tended to avoid the visible remnants of those who had occupied the land before them, perhaps out of superstition, or perhaps because they had no desire to occupy the ecologic niche favored by the Anasazis.

Whatever the reason, the Navajos did very little to hasten the slow, natural disintegration of the cultural remnants of the Anasazis, and the Fremonts left so little tangible when they dispersed that the few hunters who subsequently entered their region probably saw little trace of earlier human occupancy.



Early Spanish explorers who encountered the descendants of the Anasazi culture in Arizona and New Mexico in the mid-1500s A.D. had a devastating impact upon that relatively static Formative-stage enclave of American Indians. Later Spanish exploration parties that entered what are now Colorado and Utah, such as the famed Dominguez-Escalante expedition of 1776, saw little of the prehistoric remnants of the Anasazis and Fremonts, even though their exploring routes did penetrate the very heart of the regions these cultures had formerly occupied. This is not surprising, of course. The Spanish were looking for feasible routes through that rugged, canyon-slashed region, and living natives they could convert to Christianity, not long-abandoned prehistoric settlements located in remote cliffs and canyons.

Thus, although two major cultures, ancestral-Navajo and Spanish, invaded and to some extent occupied the abandoned territories of the Anasazis and Fremonts for hundreds of years, the remnants of these cultures that had been left behind remained largely intact, undamaged by mankind and only lightly affected by the arid desert climate. Then white men, modern Americans, entered the scene.



*Inscription left by an early Spanish explorer, El Morro National Monument, New Mexico. Note the 1709 date.*

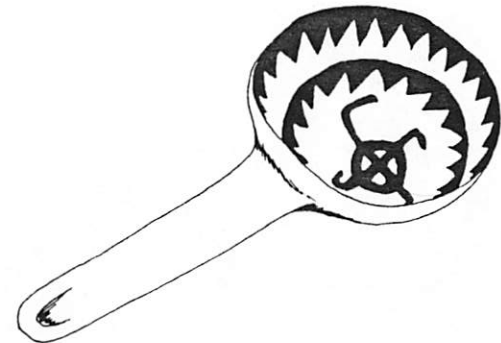
## DISCOVERY

The first impact of our modern American culture upon the remnants of the Anasazi and Fremont cultures was gentle, and barely noticeable outside of a few scholarly circles. Early exploring parties into the unmapped Four Corners region, such as the Macomb Expedition of 1859 and the Powell Expeditions of 1869 and 1871, reported finding strange rock constructions in unlikely places, but these reports went largely unheeded by archaeologists.

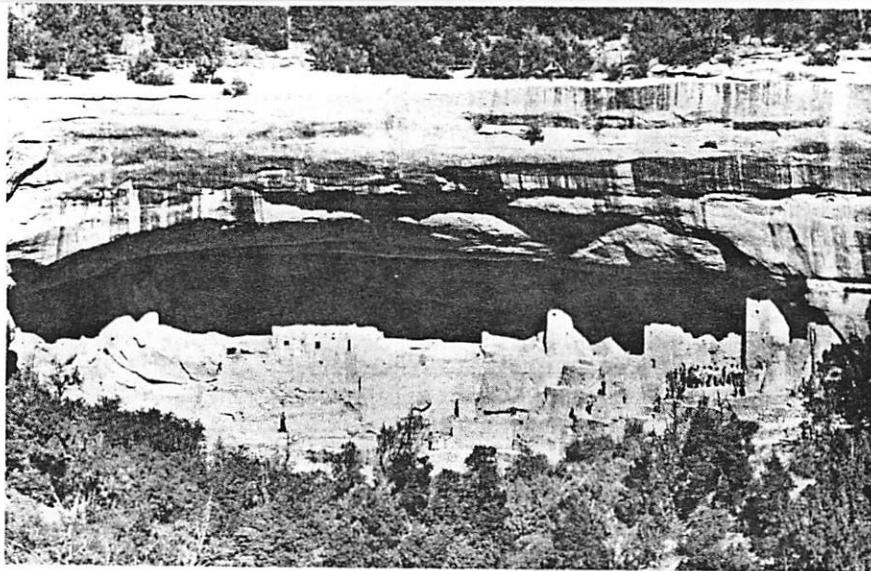
The Hayden-Jackson geologic survey of the mid-1870s also reported prehistoric ruins in the Four Corners region of Utah, as did early Mormon scouts and settlers who pioneered southeastern Utah about the same time. But again, these little-publicized findings escaped general notice, and the ancient Anasazi-Fremont domain continued to be terra incognita to contemporary America. The newly burgeoning Euro-American culture had yet to find and recognize the remnants of what had been the highest native American culture.

Then, in 1889, the Wetherills, a family of ranchers in the Four Corners area, brought this archaeological treasury to the attention of the outside world by publicizing a series of discoveries, among them the spectacular cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde in Colorado, and by collecting and selling quantities of prehistoric artifacts from the sites they found. While such flagrant sales of antiquities now would quickly earn the culprits a stiff fine, and perhaps a prison term as well, in the unenlightened days of the late 1800s there simply were no laws protecting America's precious prehistoric heritage.

It might be said, then, that for better or worse, the Wetherills initiated modern America's impact upon the remnants of the prehistoric Anasazi and Fremont cultures. This impact, more destructive than instructive, grew steadily from the dawn of the 20th century until the 1940s. Then it accelerated still further, until it has now reached an appalling level of devastation. Unless this devastation is soon slowed or halted, by the turn of the next century pitifully little will remain of the highest native-American culture that will ever exist.







Anasazi cliff-dwelling, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado.

## EARLY IMPACT

The blatant commercial exploitation of the newly discovered Anasazi cliff dwellings and other sites, by the Wetherills and others, continued for more than a decade. During this tragic interval, enormous quantities of invaluable artifacts were stripped from the ruins of what remained of the highest cultural attainment of native Americans. Terrible damage was done to the structures that still survived, as the commercial collectors excavated site after site, heedless of anything but the saleable loot they could carry away.

This incredible period of theft and destruction irreversibly blurred the cultural picture left for archaeologists to study when a hardy few eventually did manage to reach some of the major ruins of the general Four Corners region.

Shortly after the turn of the century, public and scientific outrage over the systematic commercial looting of the Anasazi ruins finally reached Congress. Thus, a federal antiquities law was enacted that at least provided theoretical legal protection to archaeological sites and other antiquities on federal land. Dated June 8, 1906, it was titled "An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities."

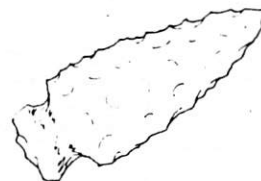
This overdue law was brief, and quite ambiguous concerning "antiquities" other than archaeological. Although covered by the 1906 law in principle, such valuable antiquities as paleontological and paleobotanical specimens—fossilized animal and plant remains—have received virtually no protection. The brief act did restrict the

"examination of ruins, the excavation of archaeological sites and the gathering of objects of antiquity" upon federal land to "reputable museums, universities, colleges, or other recognized scientific or educational institutions," and the original enforcing regulations issued by the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior and War echoed this mandate.

At the enforcement level, however, this clear mandate to protect America's priceless heritage of antiquities had two major flaws that virtually negated any value the Antiquities Act might have had. The Act applied only to federally owned or controlled land, leaving antiquities located on vast expanses of private and state lands still open to exploitation and destruction. Eventually, most states enacted similar laws, but some delayed this vital step for decades. Utah, for example, failed to enact an effective law until 1973, a classic case of locking the barn door long after most of the horses have been stolen.

The second major flaw in the practical enforcement of the 1906 Antiquities Act was the fact that few within the federal government really wanted to enforce it. While the Act did contain a broad mandate for federal land administration agencies to protect all antiquities, it had really been aimed at the commercial looters whose behavior had so enraged a large number of voters. The Act did put a stop to the more flagrant looting and destruction of this sort, but in practice afforded little if any protection to archaeological and other antiquities sites from the more surreptitious commercial and hobby collectors, or from the massive destruction from industrial development that came later. Congress underscored its casual interest in the matter by simply not funding any practical protection efforts in the field, and this attitude was inevitably reflected within all levels of the three major federal land administration agencies.

Thus, for the more than three-quarters of a century that the 1906 Antiquities Act has theoretically been in force, the practical effect this law has had on the protection of antiquities of all sorts in the Four Corners region has been minimal. The various archaeological teams that have done research in the region have observed its provisions, but few others have. Until very recently, even the federal land administration agencies, with a few exceptions such as the National Park Service, have virtually ignored the law, and their current regulations implementing the 1906 Antiquities Act contain highly questionable interpretations of such critical terms in the original Act as "objects of antiquity."





## RECENT IMPACT

After the Antiquities Act of 1906 put an abrupt halt to the more flagrant commercial collection and destruction of Anasazi cultural remnants, this practice continued at a less obvious level. Private and commercial collectors still hunted "pots" and "points" and dug in ruins, encouraged by the obvious fact that Congress had not really meant the Act to be fully enforced, and that this indifferent attitude also prevailed at all levels within federal land administration agencies.

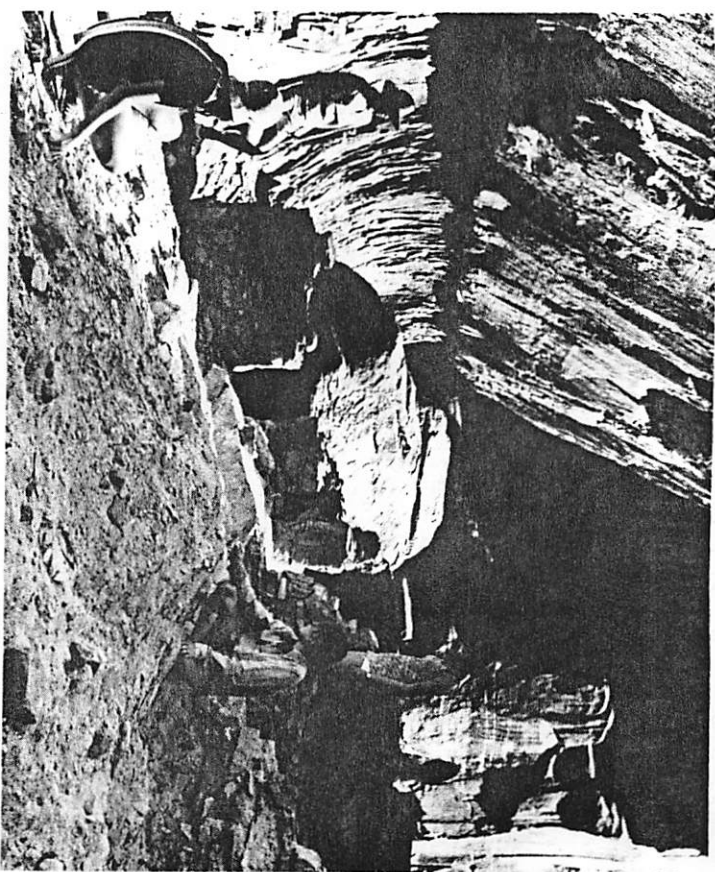
Many archaeological sites on private land were stripped of all scientific value during the succeeding decades, and a few were even developed into commercial "tourist traps." Vast commercial agricultural developments in the Four Corners region destroyed innumerable archaeological sites, while the value of countless other sites was severely diminished by local animal husbandry practices.

Antiquities on the huge blocks of state land that checkerboard federal land in the Four Corners states received little more practical protection from exploitation and damage than those on private land. While some states paid lip service to the concept of protecting archaeological sites, enforcement was nullified by low or non-existent budgets for that purpose, and by the simple fact that most archaeological sites were in remote locations within wild and terribly broken terrain, and thus difficult to protect.

Enforcement of antiquities laws was also hampered by the curious fact that thousands of archaeological sites were located within the several huge Indian reservations that sprawl across the general Four Corners region, creating an enforcement "gray area." Technically, Indian reservations are under the jurisdiction of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, and hence are "owned or controlled by" the federal government. Thus, they fall under the 1906 Antiquities Act. But for practical purposes, the Act was not enforced on reservations. While the Indians, themselves, largely ignored or avoided the countless archaeological sites on their lands, just as they had for hundreds of years, the mining and energy industries that were licensed to operate on their reservations were highly destructive.

As the destruction and exploitation of prehistoric Anasazi and Fremont sites continued on private and reservation lands, the states also cooperated in similar destruction of archaeological values on state lands by the outright sale of land into private ownership, by land exchanges with industrial and other land developers, and by the granting of land leases for agricultural and other uses that jeopardize or destroy archaeological sites.

Further, the states promoted the wholesale destruction of archaeological sites on land still under state jurisdiction by pursuing such questionable "range management" practices as "chaining." This is a process in which huge tracts of wooded land are cleared of forestation by dragging heavy steel anchor chain between large bulldozers.



*Anasazi cliff-dwelling ruin, Lavender Canyon, Canyonlands National Park, Utah. Illegal digging has severely damaged this ruin.*

This uproots and kills all the trees and larger shrubs, theoretically improving grazing for domestic livestock. It also destroys any archaeological sites that are hidden within the chained area. Within the last several decades Utah, for example, has chained many thousands of acres of pinion-juniper forestland within the region formerly occupied by the Anasazi-Fremont cultures. Few, if any, efforts were made to survey such areas for archaeological value before chaining, or to salvage anything of this nature found during the chaining.

Federal land administration agencies, with the exception of the National Park Service, also tacitly or actively cooperated in the continuing devastation of prehistoric remnants within the Four Corners region. They bowed to political pressures from the states by granting land exchanges that involved numerous archaeological sites. One such exchange on record justified the exchange on the basis that there were no sites found on a 7000 acre tract, even though such sites had been found in many places nearby. The "environmental analysis" released before the exchange noted that the archaeological survey had been performed during a certain month, a month in which only local residents knew that the area "surveyed" had been under several feet of snow, making a field survey impossible.

The two federal agencies that administer more than half of the

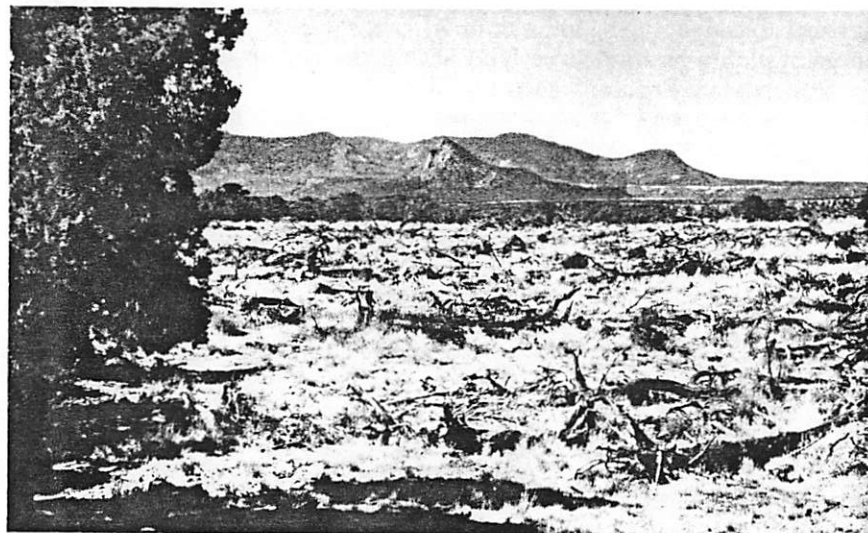


land in the Four Corners region, the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, also chained vast areas of land known to be high in archaeological potential. Typically, if surveys for these values were made at all in advance of the chaining, they were done hastily and by completely unqualified individuals, such as a local cowboy on horseback. And if even these cursory surveys found a few obvious sites, these were shrugged off as "unimportant." Since the dubious range management practice of chaining first came into use within the Four Corners states, federal land administration agencies have chained tens of thousands of acres of forestland, forever obliterating all surface traces of any archaeological sites these areas may have held. Many of those chained areas were within regions known to be rich in archaeological value.

Federal land administration agencies also cooperated in archaeological destruction by establishing thousands of miles of "utility corridors" across federal land, without adequate prior surveys for archaeological sites.

Such cynical flouting of the 1906 Antiquities Act by the federal agencies charged with its enforcement, and by state land administration agencies, has resulted in incalculable losses to the limited and irreplaceable remnants of the prehistoric Anasazi and Fremont cultures. Such losses, together with other huge losses from early looting, plus the continuing losses on private lands, have severely hampered the efforts of modern archaeologists to piece together meaningful pictures of these cultures.

It is a sad commentary on America's level of cultural sophistication that the government agencies who are charged by law with protecting and preserving American antiquities are, instead, by their actions and inactions, the greatest destroyers of these antiquities.



A "chained" pinyon-juniper forest in the foothills of the Abajo Mountains, Utah, an area that is rich in archaeological sites.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The first serious attempts at archaeological research in the Four Corners region began early in the 1900s, but were largely directed toward a general inventory of the better known sites. The succeeding decades were marked more by scientific neglect and indifference than by any concerted effort to accept the challenge of studying the prehistoric cultures of canyon country. A few competent but quite limited studies were made, and many individual sites were excavated, but there were no overall, regional surveys of the Anasazi and Fremont cultural remnants. While a few American archaeologists became interested in the region's human prehistory, most were concerned with other areas of study.

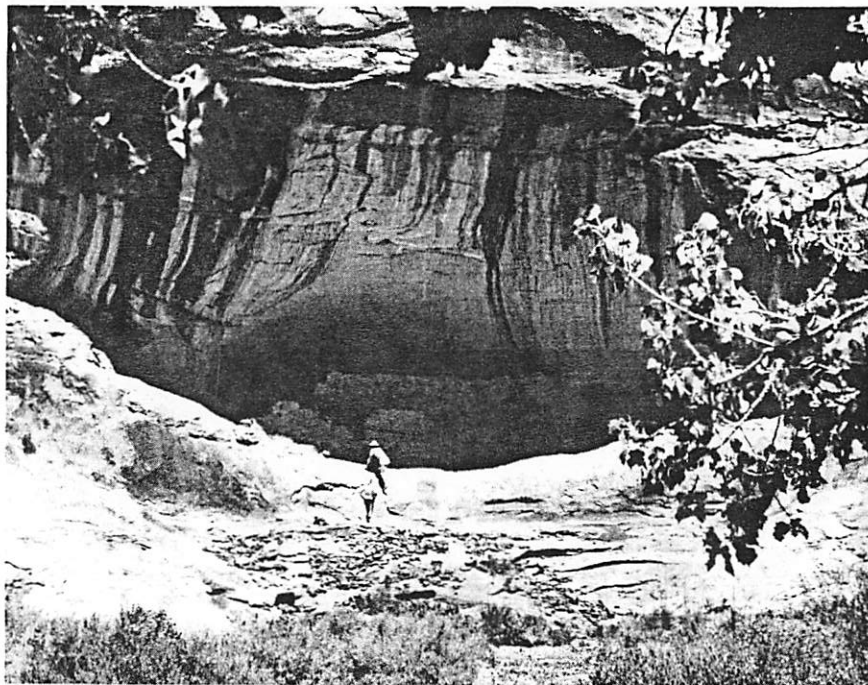
Funds for field research in canyon country were rare, whether from universities, foundations, the government, or private sources. Strangely, the most fascinating, highly developed prehistoric native-American culture was being devastated by impact with our modern American culture, with barely a whimper of protest or a surge of activity from the academic world.

Although a few dedicated researchers have taken a keen, lifelong interest in the Anasazi-Fremont cultures, and have contributed greatly toward the slowly growing body of knowledge about these unique early Americans, field research on this subject continues to be sporadic at best, and only fitfully financed by the government agencies and state universities that by law have cognizance over such research.

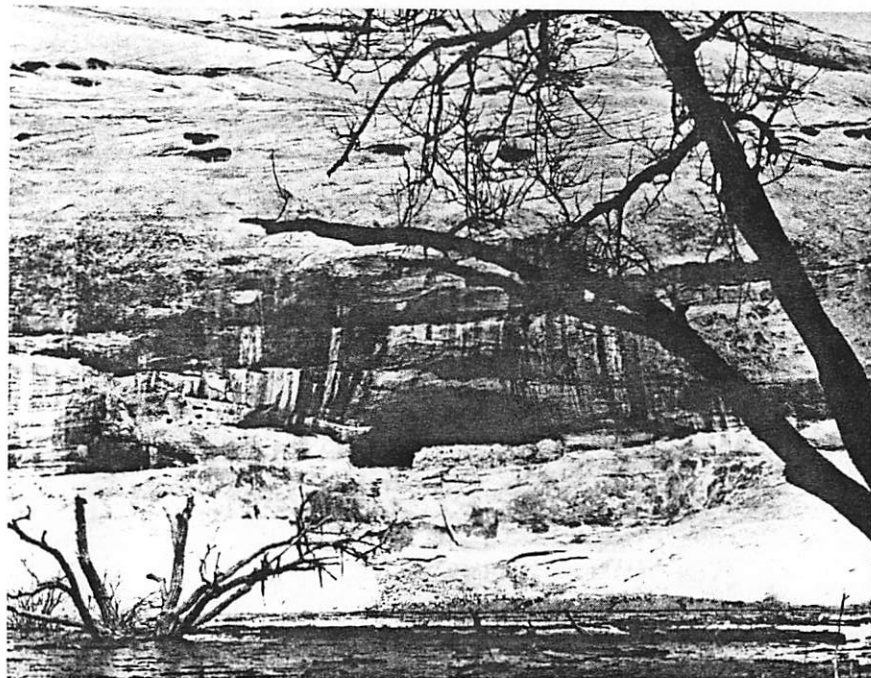
Most of the field research that is performed is in the form of crash program "salvage" operations that are belatedly set up to save whatever can be found quickly, before some immense industrial project destroys all archaeological values in an area, or along a route. The construction of Glen Canyon Dam and the creation of Lake Powell initiated one such salvage project. The construction of Flaming Gorge Reservoir was another. Although these efforts did save a considerable amount of artifacts and knowledge from total loss, there is little doubt that far more was lost, irretrievably, than was salvaged. The reservoir waters simply inundated too many hundreds of miles of deep and rugged canyons for a short-range survey or salvage operation to handle in any but the most superficial manner. Thus, while the glistening, blue waters of Flaming Gorge Reservoir and Lake Powell are beautiful to behold, they are also the dark graveyards for vast archaeological treasures that are now lost to humanity forever.

Other archaeological salvage operations, such as for highways and other construction projects, have sometimes fared better, but there is little doubt that for each site salvaged, many others are lost. One thing learned from actual field research projects is that in almost every case, more sites are found than were suspected. From this it is easy to conclude that losses due to modern "progress" are always far greater than claimed by the developers.





*Small Anasazi cliff-dwelling, Lake Canyon, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, before the reservoir filled.*



*The same ruin as the reservoir waters intruded into the canyon. The ruin is now under water.*

In sum, it could be said that the history of the impact of our modern American culture upon the prehistoric Amerind cultures of canyon country is a strange mixture of fascinating discovery, raw greed, mystifying neglect, tragic loss, cursory surveys, unique findings, scientific preoccupation, personal dedication, inexplicable mysteries, public apathy, intensive research, unenforced laws, scholastic disinterest, political cynicism, administrative inertia, industrial indifference, exotic hypotheses, and appalling destruction. This baffling exhibition of cultural ambiguity continues even now.

## PRESENT SITUATION

Within the second half of the 1970s decade, there has been a significant increase in public interest in America's prehistory. This interest has, in turn, sparked belated government efforts to identify, record and protect the rapidly dwindling remnants of this prehistory.

At the same time, however, in canyon country at least, any gains made by such protective efforts have been more than offset by explosive growth among the destructive forces that jeopardize what remains of the prehistoric Anasazi and Fremont cultures. Thus, the future looks even grimmer than the past with respect to saving these remnants.

Thoroughgoing, scientific archaeological field research projects within canyon country continue to be infrequent, sporadic and not a part of any integrated, overall survey. Some very productive, long range university field projects have been discontinued for lack of funding. Most ongoing academic research is concerned with a few major sites, most of them already well protected within federal park areas, and is generally confined to literary and laboratory work, with minimal new field effort.

Past academic efforts have at least recorded and partially studied all the known major sites, but literally hundreds of lesser sites known to exist have never been studied at all, and no overall, comprehensive archaeological survey of the entire canyon country region is in sight. In 1971, federal land administration agencies were ordered to inventory all federal lands for archaeological and other sites that might qualify for listing as National Historic Places. More recent orders for wilderness surveys have further emphasized the need for surveying federal lands for antiquities. Unfortunately, to date these required surveys have neither been funded nor organized to produce more than superficial results. In some cases, inventories have been made of all previously known and reported sites, but virtually nothing is being done to survey the land itself for the thousands of sites that undoubtedly still remain undiscovered.

Archaeological salvage operations are continuing to gather limited data, but the accelerating need for such operations means still



more permanent losses in the salvaged areas. The McPhee reservoir to be built on the Dolores River in southwestern Colorado in the Mesa Verde vicinity, will doubtless mean the permanent loss of still another huge body of knowledge, even though the University of Colorado is attempting to salvage what it can with limited time and funds. Near the site of this dam, a restored and stabilized early pueblo dwelling site will be open to visitor viewing, a public relations gesture that is supposed to compensate the American public for the hundreds of archaeological sites that will be lost forever beneath the reservoir waters.

Despite new state laws, and new federal orders enforcing the federal Antiquities Act of 1906, both federal and state land administration agencies continue to permit the destruction of archaeological sites, and even to perform such destruction themselves. Both federal and state agencies continue to cooperate with industrial, commercial and agricultural developments that destroy archaeological sites wholesale, and both still plan, fund and perform "range improvement" operations such as chaining that forever obliterate any surface signs of prehistoric remnants.

Further, both federal and state land agencies have still failed to issue regulations that impose enough control over mineral search and development operations to protect archaeological values on public land.

Utah's new antiquities law, while excellent in theory, has yet to have much effect in the field. It has encouraged various state agencies, such as the highway department, to consider antiquities during their operations, but has had little effect upon other destructive users of state land.

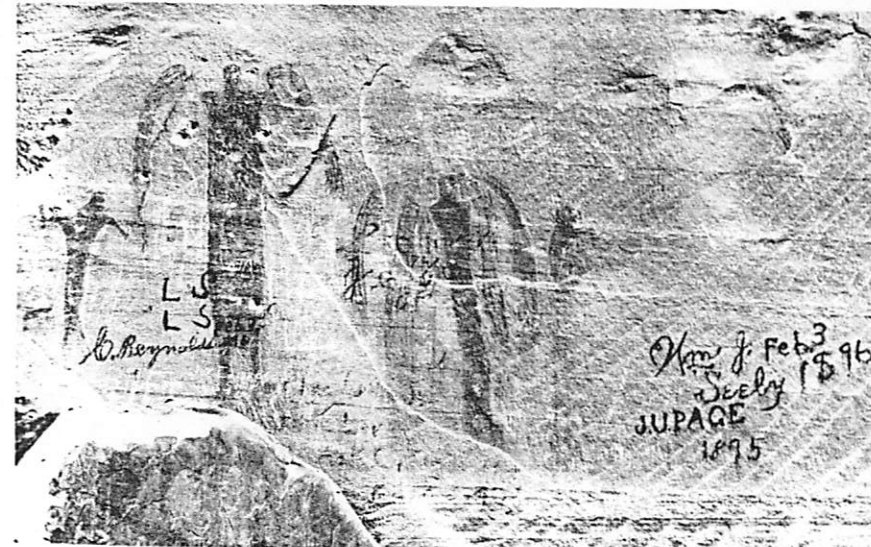
The illegal collection of prehistoric artifacts in canyon country, for both hobby and commercial purposes, continues virtually unabated. Local residents still pursue their "point and pot" searches, proudly displaying their findings at local hobby shows. Appallingly large private collections of artifacts continue to grow. Commercial collectors continue to buy and sell prehistoric artifacts. Many openly display them, or offer them for sale at local retail outlets, secure in their knowledge that antiquities laws are still not really being enforced.

Three factors encourage and sustain this cynical violation of the law by both hobbyists and commercial collectors. One is the continuing bulldozing of roads and trails into remote, previously roadless regions of canyon country by mineral search activities. Another is the rapidly growing use of off-highway vehicles to travel the many roads and trails built by the mineral industry, and hence reach remote archaeological sites. The third factor is economic. The price that can be obtained for prehistoric artifacts has grown astronomically over the last decade.

In recent years, still another hazard to archaeological sites in canyon country has shifted from minor to major. While past and present collectors have done tremendous damage to canyon country archaeological sites, their motives have generally been personal gain.

Now, however, canyon country archaeological sites are suffering from a different type of damage—vandalism, pure destruction—with no visible motive. Rock walls within ruins that have withstood the ravages of centuries of time are pushed over. Rock art panels are defaced with steel tools or spray paint or bullets.

Land administration agencies have given many known archaeological sites such special designations as "primitive area" or "historical site" in an effort to protect them, but such special designations seemingly serve only to attract vandals, unless the sites are physically guarded by ranger patrols. Even then, some collecting and vandalism continues.



These badly vandalized Fremont pictographs are in Buckhorn Wash within the San Rafael Swell in Utah. Note the numerous bullet holes in and around the larger figure, and the false dates on the spray-painted names.

It has been conjectured that since not even the Archaic-age savages who coexisted for centuries with these cultural remains deliberately destroyed or defaced them, our modern-age vandals must be a strange, new type of genetic throwback to some sub-human level that delights in mindless destruction for its own sake. There would seem to be no other explanation for such irrational behavior.

There is, however, one bright spot in the field of canyon country archaeological research. A few scientists are now attempting to do basic research on the previously neglected field of prehistoric rock art. Such pioneering researchers are aided by the fact that canyon country rock art is notoriously difficult to collect. It generally occurs on huge sandstone boulders or solid cliffs. Vandals can and do deface such primitive graphic efforts, but collectors are baffled. Thus, a high proportion of all the rock art that even existed in canyon country is still there, damaged, perhaps, but still available for study. In contrast,

most archaeological sites such as dwellings were stripped bare of artifacts, long before any archaeologist got near them. Rarely have archaeologists been the first to see an above-ground dwelling site just as its prehistoric owner left it.

In sum, the present situation is one of continuing loss of the cultural remnants of prehistoric canyon country Indians. The major destroyers are dams, utility corridors, highways, and residential subdivisions; commercial, industrial and agricultural developments; range improvement projects, logging, mineral exploration and development; and collecting and vandalism.

At present, the archaeological picture of the Anasazi and Fremont cultures is incomplete, and scientists who are concerned with this region fear that their picture will never be completed unless the present destruction of cultural remnants is halted very soon. All this would take is the effective enforcement of present laws, but this is not yet within sight.

## AMATEUR EXPLORING

As noted earlier, the roads and trails being built by the mineral industry within canyon country are being used by hobbyists and collectors to reach and strip prehistoric sites. On the positive side, however, these same access routes are also being used by an increasing number of people who recognize and appreciate the value of such sites.

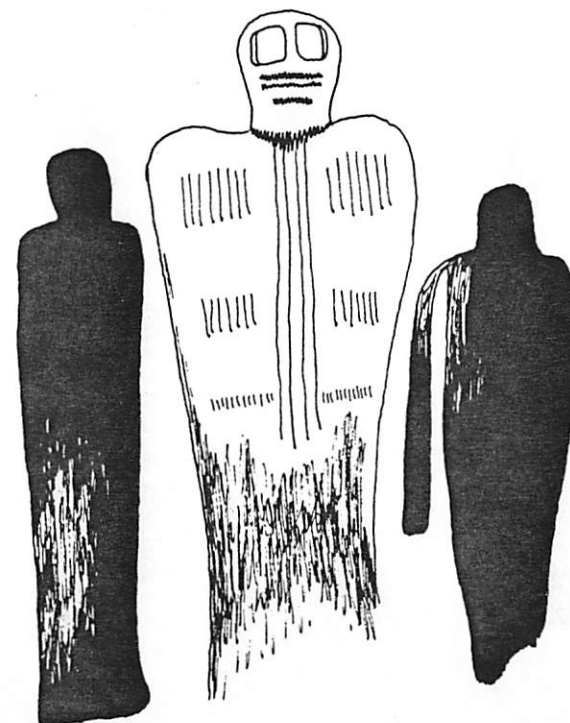
Some of these amateur archaeologists simply study what they find. Others may also attempt to contribute to the known body of knowledge by reporting their findings to the proper authorities. In the past, such public-spirited reporting was largely a waste of time. Even at present, it may not afford the site any protection or stimulate professional scientific study, but at least the conscientious citizen will have done his duty.

At a minimum, new archaeological finds should be reported to the appropriate land administration agency, if the site is on public land. Since any particular spot within canyon country may be on private, state or federal land, and under any of several state or federal agencies, the best place to start such a report is at the nearest office of the federal Bureau of Land Management. There, land ownership maps will help determine who has jurisdiction over the discovery site.

The next step is to report to the indicated federal or state agency or, if the site is on private land, to the owner and the appropriate state historical society. The BLM office can provide the necessary addresses. If an amateur explorer wishes to ensure that a discovery on public land is not lost somewhere in the bureaucratic shuffle, he would be wise to report the finding to three authorities, i.e., the land administration agency, the state historical society, and the state university.

In most of this nation, amateur explorers are not apt to encounter the problem of how to report an archaeological discovery, but canyon country is huge and still largely unexplored by archaeologists for archaeological values. Even the most casual amateur explorer has a fair chance of finding some trace of the region's prehistoric inhabitants that has never before been reported. No doubt, many such sites have been seen by individual cattlemen and prospectors, but such discoveries are valueless unless they are properly reported.

Conscientious amateur explorers have played an important part in the field of canyon country archaeology, and will continue to in the future, so long as they limit themselves to finding, studying, recording and reporting, and do not join the ranks of the collectors and vandals. No responsible American would knowingly take or destroy something that might provide a clue to one of the many cultural mysteries that still remain to be solved in canyon country.





## THIS BOOK

This book attempts to provide its readers and canyon country visitors an understanding of the prehistoric Anasazi and Fremont cultures that once occupied this immense and spectacular region, plus a representative look at some of the remnants of these cultures that so far have survived the onslaught of our contemporary culture.

The first chapter presents a look at these cultures themselves, as reconstructed by archaeologists from the research data they have accumulated to date. The chapter's introduction describes some of the problems encountered in presenting this picture.

At the end of the first chapter, one special section describes how archaeologists define some of the sub-groups within the Anasazis and Fremonts, and another describes the cultural calendar shown on the inside back cover of this book.

The next three chapters of the book discuss the three main categories of cultural remnants that archaeologists use in their studies of canyon country prehistoric cultures. These are the Anasazi and Fremont ruins, artifacts and rock art.

The chapter on each of these categories of remnants provides an introduction to the subject, a list of places where canyon country visitors can view representative displays of such remnants, and a number of photographs of typical remnants.

The final chapter notes some of the scientific books and papers used by this book's authors as research sources, and provides a list of books written in a more popular vein that are recommended for further non-technical reading. In addition to the literature sources noted, the authors have drawn upon knowledge and understanding acquired from many hours of personal conversation with anthropologists, archaeologists and other scientists who have specialized in canyon country, and upon many years of experience in the hinterlands of this vast region as amateur archaeologists.

Readers will note that in the chapters on ruins and rock art, the exact locations of specific sites are given only when the sites are well known or in protected locations. The locations of many of the sites shown in the photographs are given only in a general way, because they are still unprotected.

Serious students of such prehistoric cultural remnants are invited to contact the author of the chapters on ruins and rock art for the precise locations of the sites depicted, and many others too, if their studies require a more detailed examination than the photographs provide. This author has on file many hundreds of photographs of ruins and rock art. These are available for scientific use.

## PREHISTORIC CULTURES

by

Michaelene Pendleton

Introduction by F. A. Barnes

The Creation Legend

In The Beginning

The Anasazi Culture

The Old Ones

The Basketmakers

Modified Basketmakers

Early Pueblos

The Great Years

Cultural Decline

The Fremont Culture

Origins

The Land

The People

The Old Ways Change

Cultural Subdivisions

Anasazi

Fremont

Cultural Neighbors

A Cultural Calendar



ANASAZI CULTURAL  
SUBDIVISIONS

FREMONT LAND

VIRGIN ANASAZI

MESA VERDE ANASAZI

COLORADO

CHACO ANASAZI

COHONINO CULTURE

.....

ANASAZI

## SINAGUA CULTURE

LITTLE COLORADO ANASAZI

ARIZONA

HOHOKAM CULTURE

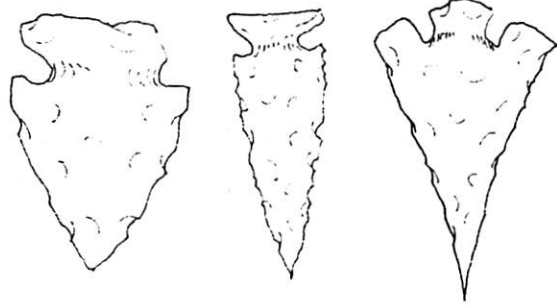
NEW MEXICO

Map by Michaelene Pendleton



	Quarai State Monument	Mountainair	U.S. 60	Highway vehicle and easy walking.
	Puye Cliff Dwellings	Espanola	New Mexico 5	Highway vehicle and easy walking or hiking.
UTAH	Canyonlands National Park	Moab or Monticello	U.S. 163, Utah 313 & county road, or Utah 211	One site on Island in the Sky district can be reached by highway vehicle and easy walking. Sites in Needles district can be reached only by off-road vehicle and/or hiking.
	Hovenweep National Monument	Blanding or Bluff	U.S. 163, Utah 262 and county road	Some sites can be reached by highway vehicle and easy walking. Other sites require off-road vehicle and/or hiking.
	Glen Canyon National Recreation Area	Hanksville, Blanding or Page, Ariz.	Utah 95, Utah 276, Utah 263, or U.S. 89	All sites are accessible only by boat, plus hiking and/or climbing at some sites.
	Anasazi Indian Village State Historical Monument	Boulder	Utah 12 & county road	Highway vehicle and easy walking.
	Edge of Cedars State Historical Monument & Westwater Ruins	Blanding	U.S. 163 & county road	Highway vehicle and easy walking.
	Beef Basin Archaeological Area (Bureau of Land Management)	Moab or Monticello	U.S. 163, Utah 211 & off-road vehicle trail	All sites are accessible only by off-road vehicle, plus easy walking or hiking.

	Grand Gulch Primitive Area (BLM)	Blanding or Hanksville	Utah 95 and Utah 261	All sites are accessible only by highway vehicle plus backpacking or horseback.
	Montezuma Canyon (BLM)	Bluff or Monticello	U.S. 163, Utah 262 & county road	Upper canyon is gravel road usually passable to highway vehicles. Lower canyon passable only to off-road vehicles. Sites accessible from road either by easy walking or hiking.
	Mule Canyon Ruin (BLM)	Blanding or Hanksville	U.S. 163 & Utah 95	Small ruins at marked highway pullout between junctions of U.S. 163/U95 and U95/U261.
	San Juan River, between Bluff and Lake Powell (BLM and Navajo Indian Reservation)	Bluff & Mexican Hat	U.S. 163 & county roads	Various ruins are accessible from the river, when run under BLM permit.



Ruin detail, Gila Cliff Dwellings N



UTAH	Arches National Park	Moab	U.S. 163	Displays are at park visitor center.
	Bryce Canyon National Park	Panguitch	U.S. 89 & Utah 12 & 63	Displays are at museum near park entrance.
	Capitol Reef National Park	Torrey & Hanksville	Utah 24	Displays are at park visitor center.
	Zion National Park	Springdale or Kanab	Utah 15 & U.S. 89	Displays are at park visitor center.
	Dinosaur National Monument	Vernal & Jensen	U.S. 40 & Utah 149	Displays are at monument visitor center.
	Hovenweep National Monument	Blanding or Bluff	U.S. 163, Utah 262 & county road	Displays are at monument visitor center.
	Natural Bridges National Monument	Blanding or Hanksville	U.S. 163, Utah 95 & Utah 275	Displays are at monument visitor center.
	Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area	Vernal, or Green River, Wyoming	Utah 44 & 43 & Wyoming 530	Displays are at Red Canyon Visitor Center
	Anasazi Indian Village State Historical Monument	Boulder	Utah 12 & county road	Displays are at monument visitor center.
	Dead Horse Point State Park	Moab	U.S. 163 & Utah 313	Displays are at park visitor center.

	Edge of Cedars State Historical Monument	Blanding	U.S. 163 & city-county roads	Displays are at museum. Follow signs from U.S. 163 in Blanding.
	Dinosaur Natural History Museum	Vernal	U.S. 40	Museum is on U.S. 40 just east of town center.
	Monticello Library & Museum	Monticello	U.S. 163	Displays are in basement of library, in center of town.
	Moab Museum	Moab	U.S. 163	Museum is one block east of U.S. 163 on Center Street.
	Navajo Tribal Park, in Monument Valley	Mexican Hat & Kayenta, Ariz.	U.S. 163 & dirt road	Displays are at visitor center, 4 miles from U.S. 163.